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ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction levels and attitudes of 47 administrators and outpatient staff working in two comprehensive community mental health centers were compared using multivariate analysis. No significant differences were found between administrators and staff, nor were any inter-agency job satisfaction differences noted. However, the agencies were differentiated with respect to specific perceptions related to political issues, intra-organizational communication, and use of individual initiative. Professional males who work in mental health agencies have job satisfaction levels lower than other comparably educated individuals, despite favorable perceptions of their work. (Author)

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Job Satisfaction and Attitudes of Professionals in Two Community Mental Health Centers

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Abstract

Multivariate analyses were used to compare job satisfaction levels and attitudes of 47 administrators and outpatient staff working in two comprehensive community mental health centers. No significant differences were found between administrators and staff. The analyses also revealed no inter-agency job satisfaction differences. However, the agencies were differentiated with respect to specific perceptions related to political issues, intra-organizational communication, and use of individual initiative. The present research, in contrast to previous studies of mental health personnel, focused on the professional. Findings replicated past research in that males who work in mental health agencies have job satisfaction levels lower than other comparably educated individuals. In the current study this existed despite favorable perceptions of their work. Discussion considered the meaning of promotion within mental health organizations, use of instruments for making inter-agency comparisons, and suggestions for future research focusing on political and work characteristics of public sector organizations.

Job Satisfaction and Attitudes of Professionals in Two Community Mental Health Centers

Despite the large volume of job satisfaction research (cf. Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Dehlinger & Perlman, 1978; and Vroom, 1964) available, these investigations have largely utilized workers in industrial settings, leaving professionals, particularly in the public sector, the "forgotten staff" (Scholom & Perlman, in press). Sarata (1974), for example, documented fewer than 20 empirical studies conducted with workers in human service settings.

Since 1974 interest in job satisfaction of members of one type of public sector organization, the mental health professional, has increased. This is reflected partly in a growing number of articles regarding the "burnout" phenomenon (Freudenberger, 1975, Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978; Warnath & Shelton, 1976) as well as research investigating the job satisfaction and attitudes of the mental health care deliverer (Cherniss & Egnatios, 1978; Cherniss, Egnatios, & Wacker, 1976; Folkins, O'Reily, Roberts, & Miller, 1977; Sarason, 1977; Sarata, 1974; 1977; Sarata & Repucci, 1975; and Sarata & Jeppesen, 1977). This research suggests that agency and job design variables, such as agency policy or organizational goals and procedures, are salient to job satisfaction among mental health staff. In addition, (a) a mental health workers' feelings of accomplishment are an influence upon job satisfaction, and (b) mental health workers' job satisfaction has been reported as being below that of same sex individuals with comparable educational levels.

However, such findings are limited by the methods and statistics employed: specifically, failure to study potentially important agency characteristics, inappropriate grouping of individuals, a lack of focus on administrators, few intra-agency comparisons, limited instruments, and incomplete statistical analyses. Each area is briefly reviewed below.

Additional information would be realized if investigators studied staff and administrator attitudes which stem from unique characteristics of public sector mental health agencies in which they work (Goodstein, 1978; Maloof, 1975). Addressed in the present study were (a) political concerns, i.e., agency-staff relationships with unified services and county boards, and (b) issues of authority and decentralization, i.e., the utilization of staff judgment (discretionary power).

A mental health organization is composed of a variety of individuals with differing educational levels, roles and responsibilities. Past research (Cherniss & Egnatios, 1978; Sarata, 1977) has tended to treat the population as homogeneous. Sarata studied three agencies which provided services to the mentally retarded, and reported the average worker's education was just over 12 years. Whether those with bachelor or more advanced degrees were included with these workers in the job satisfaction analyses was unclear. The work of Cherniss and Egnatios, who studied 294 workers from 22 mental health programs, also reflected this trend toward homogeneity. Data presented for the work, supervision, and co-worker categories for the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) was separated for male staff with three

years of college or more, male staff with less than three years of college, and female staff. However, supervisory staff (never defined) were not treated as a separate unit. How many part and full-time staff comprised their sample was also unspecified; it appears that data from the two groups was analyzed as a unit. Dehlinger (Note 1) found that part-time mental health staff expressed significantly greater satisfaction with their work and supervision than their full-time counterparts. Thus, by combining data from part and full-time workers, Cherniss and Egnatios have made it difficult to accurately interpret their results.

The mental health administrator is truly a forgotten organizational member in that no job satisfaction data could be found for them. An administrator's impact on an organization can be great. Their turnover rate, if high, is not merely costly in dollar amounts but may affect agency functioning and staff attitudes and perceptions. Further, an administrator with low job satisfaction certainly provides poor modeling for other personnel. The present research placed special emphasis on studying mental health administrators, and included analysis of similarities to, and differences from, service delivery staff.

The work of Sarata (1977) who compared data from separate agencies needs to be expanded in order to obtain an understanding of public sector organizational characteristics and staff job satisfaction levels and attitudes. Theses data would also provide information on the relationship between these variables and others such as turnover rates, and quality of health care delivery.

The instruments utilized in mental health job satisfaction research remain limited. Almost all investigators have utilized the JDI, but it is unclear whether this instrument is sensitive to the characteristics of human service organizations. For example, Cherniss and Egnatios omitted the pay and promotion scale from their research. Sarata (1977) found that the JDI did differentiate staff from three agencies on the work and co-worker scales. However, given his large sample size (n = 222) and the utilization of questionable statistical analyses (see below) the utility of the JDI in mental health job satisfaction research is still not determined. Research, (the present work included) has also made extensive use of "tailor-made" questionnaires, aimed at specific issues in need of answer. Although this approach has provided valuable information, the reliability and validity of these instruments remains to be documented.

Lastly, because of the multidimensional nature of job satisfaction (Smith, et al., 1969) as well as the multiple statistical comparisons often made, use of univariate analyses makes it difficult to determine overall differences between agencies. For example, Sarata (1977) utilized 13 two by three (sex by agency) ANOVAS and reported three significant agency differences. However, assuming independence of tests, the number of significant ($p<.05$) effects expected by chance from 39 F tests (13 ANOVAS on Two factors) is two. Given this, it is difficult to determine if in fact the three agencies did differ on job satisfaction dimensions. The use of multivariate analysis of variance or multiple discriminant analyses would have answered this question.

The present research sampled the administrators and outpatient staff from two comprehensive community mental health centers (CCMHCs). The research applied multivariate techniques to achieve the following goals: (a) determination of the ability of the JDI to differentiate between two agencies, and (b) determination of inter and intra-agency differences regarding staff and administrator job satisfaction levels and perceptions of their respective organizations.

Method

Agencies

Permission to survey administrators and outpatient staff was obtained from Inland and Lakeside CCMHCs, both located in midwest communities with populations of 32,000 and 90,000 respectively. Both provided comprehensive mental health services to multi-county catchment areas (city and rural). Overseeing their operations were Unified Services Boards who reported to the county boards.

Subjects

Within each of the agencies, all full-time outpatient and administrative staff were identified. The former were primarily engaged in psychotherapy and/or consultation and education efforts, while the latter included department heads and administrators functioning throughout the agency. In the Inland and Lakeside agencies there were 32 and 39 possible participants and 25 and 27 questionnaires were returned, yeilding response rates of 79% and 60%, respectively. Of the 27

questionnaires from Lakeside, three staff indicated part-time employment status, and the employment status of two other staff proved impossible to categorize; thus these questionnaires were dropped from the study.

The predominately married sample (89%) consisted of 64% males and 34% females (2% not responding). There were 30% administrators and 70% outpatient clinical staff, with 11% having high school diplomas, 21% college degrees, 55% master's degrees and 6% Ph.D.'s (6% missing data). Their salaries were in the middle income bracket, with 17% earning less than $12,000, 58% earning between $12,000 and $18,000, and 25% earning more than $18,000. The average age of the respondents was 38.3 years; the average tenure was 5.98 years for Lakeside and 2.87 for Inland, respectively.

Instruments

Two self-report questionnaires were employed. The first was the Job Descriptive Index, which seeks to assess five variables which factor analytic studies (Ash, 1954; Baehr, 1954; 1956; Wherry, 1954) have consistently reported as salient to the overall concept of job satisfaction. These variables are: work, pay, promotion, supervision, and co-workers. Five JDI categories, each corresponding to one of these variables, contain series of phrases which describe the particular aspect of the job situation relevant to that variable. Smith et al. (1969) cited numerous studies which found a high degree of discriminant and convergent validity for the JDI. Furthermore, they reported

minimum correlations of .70 and .80 with several other measures of satisfaction, as well as split-half internal consistency estimates which averaged about .80. The JDI has been accepted as a highly reliable and valid measure of job satisfaction (Vroom, 1964). Participants were asked to respond to standard JDI instructions. Scores were computed according to the methodology of Smith (Note 2).

The second survey instrument employed, the Job Attitude Survey for Community Mental Health (JAS), utilized a series of one to seven continua, representing definite disagreement to definite agreement. Participants were asked to circle the number which most closely resembled their agreement with a statement presented in each of 26 corresponding questions about their job. (See Table 1). These questions reflected organizational dimensions thought to be related to mental health work and thereby examined communication, pay-promotion-supervision, relationships with governing boards, and individual position characteristics (authority, opportunity for independent decision making, growth, autonomy, etc.) Demographic data were also obtained (age, sex, highest degree earned, tenure, hours worked/week, marital status, and salary). Respondent income levels were approximated by having respondents indicate which one of six ranges included their salary (less than $8,000, $8,000-$10,000, $10,000-$12,000, $12,000-$15,000, $15,000-$18,000, and over $18,000 per year).

Procedure

A detailed, written account of the purposes of the research and procedures to be used in conducting the survey was presented to agency

Table 1

The 23 JAS Items by Category with Means and Standard Deviations

JAS Item #	Position Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation
2	Opportunities for training and growth	5.28	1.66
3	A sense of accomplishment	6.02	1.07
4	Opportunity to use individual judgment and initiative	6.51	.80
5	Sense of responsibility	6.40	.92
7	Best utilization of knowledge and training	5.00	1.76
8	Freedom to pursue individual job interests	5.34	1.43
9	Contributes to community mental health	6.28	.93
15	Flexible work schedule	5.70	1.61
	Communication		
10	Opportunity to talk with other staff informally	5.51	1.63
12	Adequate input to administrative policies	3.96	2.31
14	Like to participate in social activities with colleagues during working hours	4.00	1.81
16	Adequate communication between departments	3.70	1.96
18	Sufficiently aware of work activities of colleagues	4.57	1.89
11	Is participating in scheduled meetings important	5.40	1.47

Table 1 - continued

JAS Item #	Supervision	Mean	Standard Deviation
13	Adequate support from supervisor	4.94	1.96
19	Receiving adequate feedback	4.19	1.95
	Board Relationships		
20	Good MHC-unified Board working relationship	4.62	1.89
21	County Board has adequate understanding of MHC	2.51	1.50
22	Good County Board and MHC working relationship	3.51	1.85
	Pay and Promotion		
1	Anticipate promotion in future	3.19	2.06
17	Would view position more favorably if salary were increased	3.72	2.21
6	Salary comparable with opposite sex in same position	5.40	1.97
23	Would you leave if similar job offered elsewhere	2.94	1.83

a_1=definite disagreement to 7=definite agreement

staff and administrators. This was followed by a group meeting to discuss the proposed study. Anonymity and confidentiality regarding information obtained from individuals were emphasized.

Each participant received a survey packet containing a stamped, addressed envelope; a detailed instruction sheet; and the two surveys. The instruction sheet contained a description of the procedure for completing the questionnaires and another statement of the purpose of the sutyd with assurance of participant anonymity. Survey packets were labeled by employee name and job title, with instructions to remove this identification prior to their return. All packets were distributed in employee mailboxes by a CCHMC staff member who did not otherwise participate in the survey. Provisions were made to discuss results of the research with CCHMC staff and administrators.

Results

The results are divided into four domains: (a) JDI and JAS descriptive results, (b) relationships between the demographic variables and JDI and JAS items, (c) relationships between the JDI scales and the JAS questions, and (d) agency and position differences. Despite the sample size, as an initial study of mental health professionals, multivariate statistical procedures have heuristic value by allowing the above mentioned comparisons. Before these results were presented, however, it is important to note that the agencies differed significantly on only one demographic item; the members of Lakeside agency were longer tenured than Inland agency participants, $t(43)=2.58$, $p<.02$.

JDI and JAS Descriptive Results

To determine the relative job satisfaction level of the present samples, the norm tables developed by Smith et al. were employed. Smith et al. suggested that those norm tables might be used if the variances for a particular sample were comparable to the variances of the JDI male and female normative groups. A test for homogeneity of variance (Winer, 1971, p. 37) indicated nonheterogeneity for the female data, and all male data excepting work, $F(1970, 29) = 2.08$, $p<.01$. The work scale standard deviations for the male sample and norm group were 7.30 and 10.54 respectively. Given this single difference, comparisons made with the norm sample may be made with confidence.

The sample studied was unique in that it was much better educated than the overall JDI norm group. The manual for the JDI, however, presents normative tables stratified by sex and years of education. These tables present percentile rankings for the separate groupings, and thus it was possible to explore the relative ranking of the members of the current sample to members of groups of approximately the same education levels. This was accomplished by using a Chi Square goodness of fit test with one degree of freedom. The present sample was dichotomized into those scoring above and at or below the 50th percentile. These frequencies were then compared with the expected frequencies based on 50% of the sample appearing in each of the cells (see Table 2 for these percentages and Chi Square analyses).

As the chi square analyses in Table 2 display males were significantly below the 50th percentile on four of the five scales. Only on promotion did they not differ from the norm sample. For females none of the five JDI scales differed from the norm sample. Job satisfaction of these male mental health staff and administrators appears to be below the median for groups of comparably educated individuals.

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the 23 JAS items. In general, the items dealing with position characteristics were responded to most positively, pay and promotion, and board relationships most negatively.

Demographic Relationships with the JDI and JAS

The demographic variables of education level and martial status were not significantly related to any JDI or JAS item. The number of hours worked was not analyzed because all but one respondent indicated they worked 40 hours a week. Further correlational analyses indicated that only three of the JDI-demographic correlations were significant; age with co-workers, $r(45) = .29$, $p<.05$, tenure with work $r(43) = .31$, $p<.05$, and salary with pay $r(44) = .39$, $p<.01$).

There were 21 significant correlations ($p<.05$) between JAS items and demographic variables. Because many do not bear directly on agency-administrator differences to be studied, only summary information is provided. The older the employees, the more positive their attitudes were with respect to internal communications and communication with the unified board. Salary relationships showed that more highly paid

Table 2

Percentage of Sample Scoring Above the 50th Percentile of the JDI Stratified Norm Sample with Associated Chi-Square Analyses

JDI Scale	Males		Females	
	Percentage	Chi-Square[a]	Percentage	Chi-Square[b]
Work	26%	7.26**	44%	--
Pay	29%	5.45*	50%	--
Promotion	35%	--	50%	--
Supervision	26%	7.26**	44%	--
Co-Workers	29%	5.45*	38%	--

[a]Based on nor group with education level about 15 years

[b]Based on norm group with education level above 8 years

*$p<.025$

*$p<.01$

employees saw less opportunity to interact informally, as well as more favorable relationships with the unified board, and perceived equality in pay. These correlations are confounded by the fact that there exists a significant sex by salary relation with fewer females at higher pay levels. Those with longer tenure were more positive about their positions, more positive about internal and external communications and indicated they were less likely to leave or to feel better about the job if it had higher pay. Females desired less social contact than did the males, felt underpaid for comparable work, and perceived poorer relationships with the unified board.

Relationships between JDI and JAS

To determine the relationship between the JDI scales and the JAS items, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between the two sets of variables. Table 3 presents the significant correlations ($p<.05$) between the two sets of terms. Of 115 correlations, 59 were significant; the supervision scale had the fewest significant correlations (8), while promotion had the most (17). Four of the JAS items correlated significantly with all five JDI scales (a sense of accomplishment, best utilization of knowledge and training, pursuit of individual interests, and receiving adequate feedback). Several items correlated with four JDI scales and only three JAS items were not significantly related to any JDI scale. The overall median correlation was .29 and the median significant correlation was .41. While there were some significant relationships between the two questionnaires, the two instruments apparently were not measuring exactly the same job dimensions.

Table 3

Significant Correlations between JDI Scales and JAS Items

JAS Item #	Work	Pay	Promotion	Co-Work	Supervision
1					31
2			48		
3	53[a]	31	64	47	32
4	46	42	38	29	
5			37		
6	40	51	49	40	
7	50	36	50	31	37
8	45	29	45	45	36
9			38		41
10					
11					
12	40		68	43	
13	31		41	33	55
14	31				
15					
16	56	33	41	50	
17		-35			
18	34		42	41	32
19	44	31	57	53	38
20	42	42	53	33	
21			39		
22			48		
23		-32	-47	-32	

[a]underlined correlations significant at the .01 level, all others significant at the .05 level.

While the correlations provide useful and interpretable results, they do not allow a determination of maximum overall relationships between the two instruments. Therefore, a canonical analysis was performed, which yielded two significant correlations, $R(115) = .95$, $p<.001$; $R(88) = ,88$, $p<.01$. While the zero order correlations indicated that the two instruments were not measuring identical concepts, the canonical relationships do show that the instruments are related at a construct level. However, because of problems inherent in the interpretation of canonical coefficient weights (Alpert & Peterson, 1972), further analyses of the instruments' construct relationships were left for future studies.

Agency and Position Differences

Because of the multivariate nature of the two instruments, six Multiple Discriminant Analyses were performed to assess agency and position differences. For each instrument three discriminant analyses were performed: (a) comparing position by agency, partialing out agency and position main effects; (b) comparing agencies ignoring position; and (c) comparing administrators and staff ignoring agency.

No significant differences were found for the JDI scales among all three analyses, indicating that the two agencies and administrator-staff job satisfaction levels did not differ. In definite contrast were the results for the 23 JAS items. While the results of the position analysis and agency by position analysis were not significant, the agency analysis yielded one significant function, $\chi^2_{Chi}(23) = 79.48$, $p<.001$. Table 4

presents the standardized discriminant weights and JAS means with corresponding F ratios for all items which loaded above ±.40.

The standardized weights indicated two sets of items discriminating between the groups. The first pair, weighted positively, dealt with input to policies and communication between departments (intra-agency communication) while the second pair of items, weighted negatively, dealt with understanding by the county board and the ability to employ individual judgment and initiative. The group centroids were 1.00 for Lakeside and -.88 for Inland. These two agencies in comparison to each other can be described as follows: Lakeside agency perceived poorer understanding by the county board, less ability to employ individual judgment and initiative, and relatively positive internal communication. Inland agency, in contrast, perceived better board understanding, greater ability to employ individual judgment and initiative but poorer internal communications.

Discussion

The results of the present study suggest the following conclusions: (a) job satisfaction and attitude characteristics of administrators sampled did not differ from those of outpatient staff; (b) job satisfaction of male administrative and outpatient staff was significantly lower than comparably educated individuals; (c) a general measure of job satisfaction, the JDI, provided important information, but did not discriminate between these two public sector agencies; (d) one public sector organizational component, understanding by the county board, served

Table 4

JAS Item Standardized Discriminant Function Weights with Means for Inland and Lakeside Agencies and Corresponding F Ratios

JAS Items	Weights	JAS Item Mean[a]		F
		Lakeside	Inland	
4 Individual Judgement & Initiative	-.48	6.45	6.56	
21 County Board Understanding	-.62	1.59	3.32	22.89***
12 Input to Policies	.58	4.73	3.28	4.98*
16 Communication Between Departments	.51	4.45	3.04	6.91**

[a] 1=definite disagreement to 7=definite agreement

to clearly differentiate between the two mental health centers; and (e) despite relatively low levels of job satisfaction, the mental health professionals perceived that their positions provided them with feelings of accomplishment, responsibility, and freedom for individual judgment and initiative.

In the present study, administrators and outpatient staff were similar with regard to levels of job satisfaction and attitudes, as measured by two independent instruments (the JDI and JAS). Such outcomes may be due to the fact that many administrators engaged in some direct-service work. In addition, statistical analyses revealed no significant demographic differences between the two groups. In short, although combining the data of administrators and outpatient staff was supported in the present study, the possible differences between these two groups must be explored further.

Results also partially support Cherniss and Egnatios's findings in that males who work in the mental health arena possess job satisfaction levels lower than comparably educated individuals. This appears to be true even though the present study included only the mental health professional (as defined by education level, salary, and work functions) while the Cherniss and Egnatios sample included paraprofessionals with other mental health staff. The female job satisfaction levels may be an artifact of the JDI norm table characteristics which combine all females with educational levels of eight years and above into one category. Such a circumstance may make the female professional's job

satisfaction appear to be more favorable than it is in realtiy because, in general, the JDI norm tables who a positive relationship between satisfaction and education level.

It is also important to note that the JDI promotion scale was highest of the five scales for males and females and was significantly related to many JAS items. What significance does promotion have within a mental health care delivery setting when taff typically are hired for a specific position with little meaning attached to "moving up" an organizational ladder? Future research will necessitate development of a clearer definition of the concept of promotion within the mental health delivery system.

"Tailor-made" questionnaires which focus on public sector organizations may continue to provide useful information about the attitudes of workers and professionals. In our research the item concerning understanding by the county board (a political issue) discriminated between Lakeside and Inland. Input to agency policies and communication between departments also discriminated between the two agencies. An expansion of the JAS with respect to the influences of political entities on the mental health delivery system would seem to be needed. Presently the JAS is being expanded along the lines mentioned above.

The significant effect of communication as differentiating between agencies must be viewed with caution.. Lakeside had significantly longer-tenured staff than Inland. Further, tenure proved to be

significantly correlated with communication. Tenure appears to relate positively to many attitudes about the professional's work. Thus the distinction between the two agencies may be on tenure rather than communication.

The data reported in the current study indicated that, despite feelings of accomplishment, a sense of responsibility, and use of initiative and judgment being rated highly (all over six on a one-seven scale) by administrators and outpatient staff, their job satisfaction levels were still low. Thus, for the mental health professional working in a public sector organization, such relatively positive perceptions of work characteristics were not sufficient to produce even average levels of job satisfaction. To improve the mental health professional's job satisfaction, it is not clear whether jobs need to be redesigned (as Sarata argued) to provide for maximum levels of accomplishment, responsibility, and initiative, or whether there exist other aspects of work (Cherniss & Egnatios, in press; Goodstein, 1978, Sarason, 1977) affecting the professional's job satisfaction. For example, this paradox of favorable perceptions of apparently important work components yet low job satisfaction could result if the expectations of the professional are not congruent with the personal needs the work actually meets. If this is the case, one solution is to educate mental health professionals so that their work expectations become more congruent with the realities of their work situations. A critical need exists for a more thorough understanding

of the entire public sector service picture in all its complexities so that intervention efforts (e.g., survey feedback, job redesign, etc.) which are aimed at raising administrator and staff job satisfaction levels have an optimal probability of success.

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